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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

AIRGRAM

A-233

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TO : Department of State

EO 11652: XGDS

TAGS: PINS

FROM : AmEmbassy GUATEMALA

SUBJECT: INTERNAL SECURITY

REF :

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

BUREAU OF

INTER-AMERICAN AFFAIRS

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SUMMARY: The October total of 56 incidents of a probable political nature was on a par with the 1973 monthly average (54). Among the 32 assassination victims this month were the president and secretary of the Retalhuleu office of the Central Aranista Organizada. Captured suspects claimed they had been contracted by the local MLN chief. Other incidents of allegedly election-connected violence included the purported brief kidnapping of PARN leader Secord Motta and a claimed kidnapping attempt against a PR politician. Last month's spurt of subversive propaganda activities continued into this month in three minor incidents. Guerrillas also may have been responsible for two attacks against mobile military police stations. In the Peten, the Army arrested two accused of smuggling arms from Belize. END SUMMARY.

I. Statistics: The October total of 56 press-reported incidents of a probable political nature was close to the January-September monthly average (54). Statistics included 32 assassinations, eight with reported signs of torture, and 10 kidnappings and disappearances. Victims this month included four small businessmen, two soldiers, two suspected guerrillas, one student, one rancher, a peasant, and an accountant who may have been operating a clandestine radio station. Two Aranista leaders in Retalhuleu were killed and a DCG activist in Flores, Peten, was kidnapped. The secretary-general of a Communist-affiliated union was briefly detained for possessing subversive literature. The

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Far Left reportedly initiated 7 incidents (12.5% of the total), 5 incidents (9%) were attributed to the Government, and the remainder of the total was not readily attributable. The South Coast once again had by far the greatest number of incidents.

II. CAO Leaders Slain in Retalhuleu: The president and secretary of the Retalhuleu office of the Central Aranista Organizada (CAO), a husband and wife, disappeared October 6 and four days later their bodies were found shot, stabbed, and reportedly with signs of torture. A few days later police arrested two suspects who claimed they had been contracted by the local MLN chief, who was concerned that CAO recruitment had made serious inroads into the MLN ranks. The MLN chief fled and reportedly still is "in hiding." MLN Director Mario Sandoval told inquiring reporters that party leaders could not control the actions of all their affiliates and repudiated the action. Shortly thereafter an MLN-PID Coalition deputy candidate from Retalhuleu, Fredy Engel, declined his candidacy. One MLN Congressman asserted to us that the resignation was related to the assassinations.

III. Questionable Kidnapping Incidents: Two other incidents of allegedly election-connected violence occurred in the capital during the month. PR Organization Secretary Ruben Castellanos claimed he was struck on the neck and narrowly escaped a kidnapping attempt October 17 while driving to party headquarters. Castellanos speculated that the attack was perpetrated to prevent him from attending a PR reunion where he would have opposed the Paiz Novales nomination. Alvaro Palma, Secretary of the PR Metropolitan Council, which backed the Paiz nomination, retorted that Castellanos had suffered from a "nervous breakdown."

The next victim of "aggression" was Roberto Secord Motta, Secretary General of the PARN, one of the groups backing Peralta. Secord claimed he was kidnapped for two hours, beaten and left in a garbage heap by unknown persons who warned him he would be killed if he did not cease his political activity. A National Police spokesman dismissed the Secord incident as an attempt to exploit injury suffered in a barroom brawl.

IV. Subversive Activity: Last month's spurt of subversive propaganda incidents continued into October, with the explosion of a propaganda bomb in Zacapa, the discovery of a bag of PGT leaflets in Chimaltenango and the discovery of PGT signs along a rail line near Coatepeque. The press also blamed guerrillas for an incident in Gualan, Zacapa on October 25 in which a group of attackers opened fire on a mobile military police unit travelling on the Atlantic highway.

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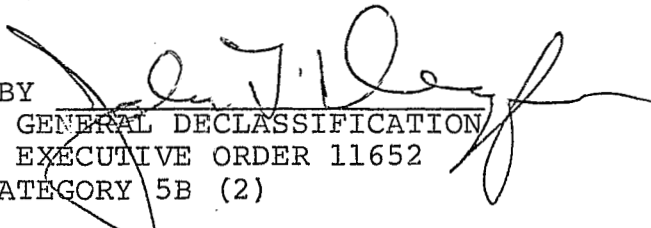
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The Army confirmed that two of the attackers and one soldier died in the incident. Guerrillas also may have been responsible for an attack during the first week of the month against a mobile military police station in Jalapa on the highway to San Salvador. The assailants captured four machine guns.

V. Arms Smugglers Captured in El Peten: The press reported that the mobile military police arrested two men in Poptun, El Peten, accused of smuggling arms from Belize into Guatemala. The two smugglers reportedly were captured with over 1,000 English-made shells.

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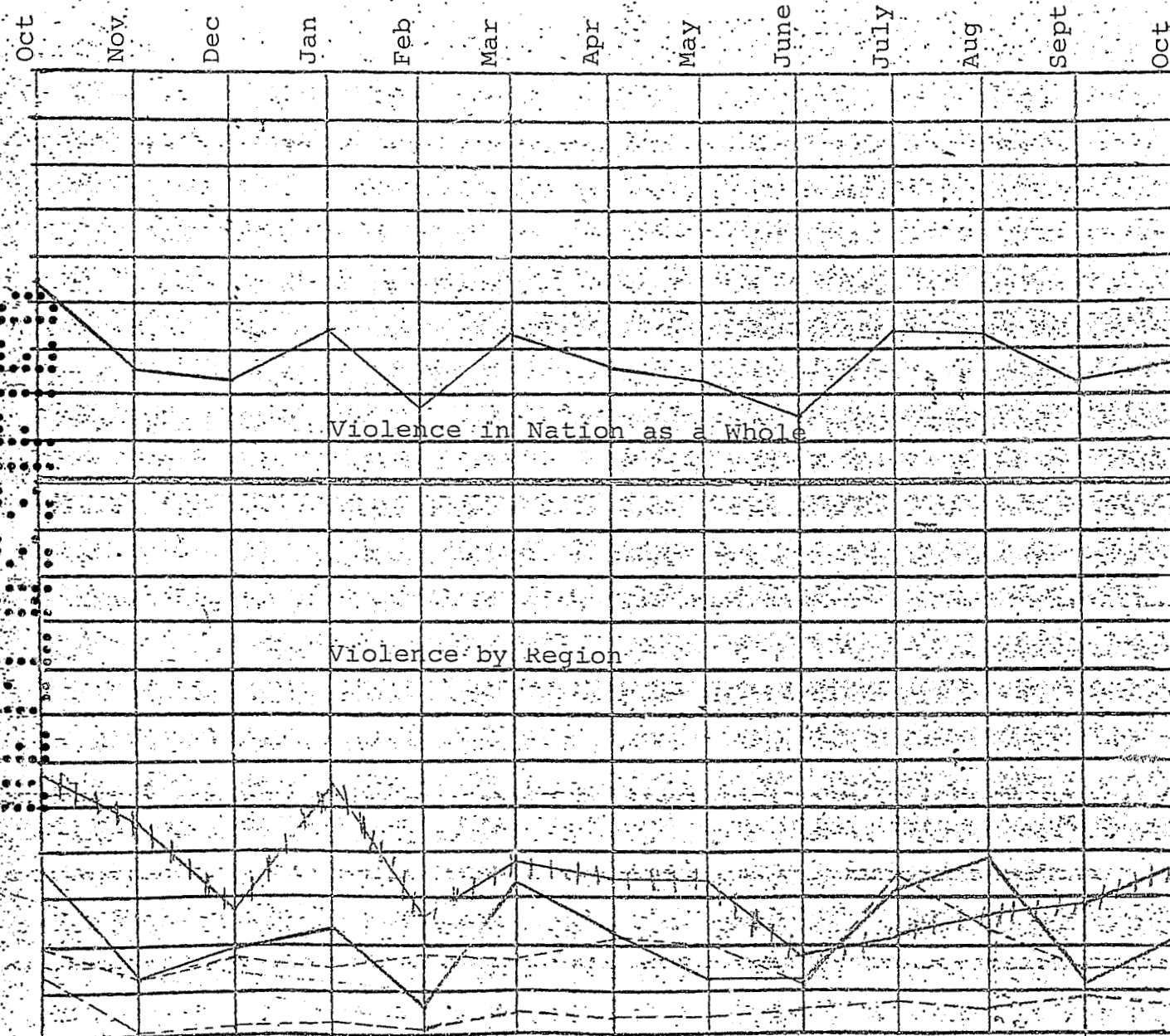
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MONTHLY FREQUENCY OF POLITICAL INCIDENTS BY REGION - OCTOBER 1972 - OCTOBER 1973



160
140
120
100
80
60
40
20
0
77
70
63
56
49
42
35
28
21
14
7

TOTAL 56

For purposes of this graph, acts of violence include shootings, bombings, and deaths, all of which appear to be politically motivated.

Capital area - Sacatepequez, Guatemala

South Coast - San Marcos, Quezaltenango, Retalhuleu, Suchitepequez, Escuintla, Santa Rosa

Eastern Region - Jutiapa, El Progreso, Jalapa, Zacapa, Chiquimula, Izabal, El Peten

Highlands - Totonicapan, Chimaltenango, Huehuetenango, El Quiche, Baja Verapaz, Alta Verapaz, Solola